



Sports Nutrition

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HOW TO BOOST YOUR IRON INTAKE

- Iron is an important part of the red blood cell that helps transport oxygen to your muscles. If you have a diet that is low in iron, you may develop iron deficiency anemia. The symptoms are weakness and rapid fatigue upon exertion.
- The Recommended Daily Allowance for iron is 10 milligrams for men, 15 milligrams for women. Women require more iron than men because they lose it through menstrual bleeding. The average woman consumes less than the RDA for iron.
- You can absorb the iron in meat and animal products twice as efficiently as that in vegetables. For example, although spinach is a relatively iron-rich vegetable, only 3% of its iron is absorbable. Animal proteins enhance the absorption of the vegetable-iron when the two types of food are eaten together. Hence, if you were to eat spinach along with some chicken, meat or fish, the animal protein would help you to better absorb the vegetable-iron. Similarly, if you add lean hamburger to chili, the meat will enhance absorption of the iron in the chili beans.
- Vitamin C may enhance iron absorption. Plan to eat vitamin C rich foods along with meals, such as orange juice with breakfast cereal, sliced tomato on tuna sandwich, broccoli with fish. Some fruits rich in vitamin C include oranges, grapefruit, cantaloupe, kiwi and strawberries. Vitamin C rich vegetables include broccoli, spinach, peppers, tomato and potato.
- Bread, cereal and other wholesome carbohydrates are good sources of iron if the words *enriched* or *fortified* are on the food label. In general, grain products offer very little iron, and that iron is poorly absorbed. The iron in fortified grains supplements the little bit that occurs naturally. You can significantly boost absorption of this iron by eating a source of vitamin C with grains. For example, by having a glass of orange juice with breakfast cereal, you'll absorb 2.5 times more iron.
- When cooking, use cast iron skillets and pots. They offer more nutritional value than stainless steel! For instance, the iron content of tomato sauce increases from 3 to 88 milligrams / half-cup sauce when simmered in an iron pot for 3 hours.
- Milk and dairy products are poor sources of iron. Hence, if you rely primarily on cheese, yogurt, milk and other dairy products for protein, remember that you also need to include some other iron-rich foods in your diet. Vegetarians who avoid red meat have a much higher risk of becoming anemic.
- If you do not eat lean red meats, iron-enriched breakfast cereals or grains, and do not use cast iron cookware, you might want to take a simple iron supplement, such as is found in a multi-vitamin and mineral pill. Taking the ADA may help protect you from becoming anemic, but remember that the iron in meats and animal foods is absorbed better.
- If you are an avid runner or participate in running-type sports, you should pay particular attention to your iron intake. Runners, as compared to other athletes, are more prone to becoming anemic because they often experience small blood losses via the intestinal track as well as damaged blood cells due to the pounding on their feet.

The following list indicates the iron content of popular foods. To determine if you meet the RDA, add up the milligrams of iron that you consume in a day.

FOOD	IRON (mg)	FOOD	IRON (mg)
Liver, 4 oz. cooked	10*	Baked beans, 1/2 cup	2
Beef, 4 oz. roasted	6*	Kidney beans, 1/2 cup canned	2
Pork, 4 oz. roasted	5*	Bean curd (tofu), 1/4 cake	2
Turkey, 4 oz. roasted dark meat	3*		
Tuna, 6.5 oz. canned light	2*	Cereal, 100% fortified	18
Chicken breast, 4 oz. roasted	1*	(Total, Just Right), 3/4 cup)	
Fish, 4 oz. broiled haddock	1*	Kellogg's Raisin Bran, 1/2 cup	18
Egg, 1 large	1	Cream of Wheat, 1/2 cup cooked	9
		Wheat Chex, 2/3 cup	4.5
Prune juice, 8 ounces	3	Spaghetti, 1 cup cooked, enriched	2
Apricots, 12 halves dried	2	Bread, 1 slice enriched	1
Dates, 10-dried	1		
Raisins, 1/3 cup	1	Molasses, 1 Tbsp. blackstrap	2
Spinach, 1/2 cup cooked	2	Brewer's yeast, 1 Tbsp.	2
Green peas, 1/2 cup cooked	1	Wheat germ, 1/4 cup	2
Broccoli, 1/2 cup chopped	1		